

RUFFDRAFTS

the DOG WRITERS ASSOCIATION of AMERICA

WINTER 2022



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LIFE WITH
A NEW PUPPY

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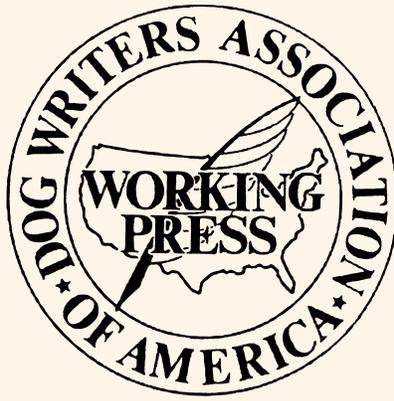
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AFOOT IN FRANCE

The Things Dogs Learn



Ruff Drafts

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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

My Dog Doesn't Listen to Me

THE MOST FREQUENT complaint I hear from humans is that their dog doesn't listen. Yes, he does, that is, unless the dog is deaf. A majority of dogs hear and listen perfectly, not only to your words, but also to your body language. The trouble begins when a dog chooses not to do what was asked of him, or worse, he doesn't understand what that means. Dogs are not born bilingual. Simply put, dogs communicate with eye contact, body language, and sound. They don't understand our language until we teach it to them. In the case of a dog who chooses not to do as asked, even though he understands the command, tells you he is not motivated to obey. Period.

Forcing a dog to do anything (or a human, for that matter), results in nothing more than mechanical, by rote, obedience. In other words, dogs, and some humans, perform tasks because not doing so will result in something unpleasant. A dog is not freely choosing to listen, and he won't obey again at the first opportunity not to. He has to have a free choice. It has to be worth his while. Free choice is the only way that people and dogs willingly obey every time.

This issue of Ruff Drafts is about the things dogs learn. And... they do learn to do remarkable things. Most important to me, though, is the irrefutable need to understand what WE learn from them. Until we understand how dogs learn, and how to speak their language, we can hardly expect them to "listen." In fact, sometimes I find it a wonder that dogs learn anything positive at all from some of us. As an example, we leave food on a coffee table, and can't imagine why a dog takes it and eats it, even though we told him not to. After all, he should have known better, right? The fact that dogs live in a "here and now" world tells me that any dog will gulp down your hamburger if given an unsupervised chance because it is an instantaneous reward. What honest dog wouldn't steal, unless he is trained to leave food alone when it's within reach and also that it is worth his while to do so.

Another example of what I call injustice training is when we don't teach dogs a way to tell us that they need to go out and then become annoyed when they defecate on the floor. How many of us allow a puppy to lie on the couch



Therese Backowski
and her dogs, Lucy
(L) and Hank

with us and then get angry when a new couch arrives and he gets it all muddy.

In essence, we teach dogs to do nearly everything they do in our world, even if it is inadvertent and unwanted. Dogs learn from us.

We have to focus on what we learn from them so we can be effective companions. I am convinced that our relationship with dogs can become very skewed. It begins with the perception that we are our dog's "mom or dad." That does a great injustice to dogs. In many ways, they are so much better than humans. We must allow dogs to be what they are, dogs. Burdening a dog with human emotions, such as guilt, retribution, and anger confuses them and interferes with their ability to learn. So, yes, dogs learn a great deal from us. And more important, we need to learn from them. Let's concentrate on how they think and communicate. I have no doubt that when we do, our dogs will learn even more.

Therese Backowski

Therese Backowski

DWAA President

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

DEAR MEMBERS,
Happy New Year. I hope yours is going well, or at least better than the last year or so. As my grandmother used to say, “You can’t fall out of a well.” What a great description of our recent past!

As I reflected on the highs and lows of 2021, I decided I would look forward to this year with the renewed enthusiasm of a cockeyed optimist (thanks to the late, great Betty White for reminding me of that expression). One of the reasons I am so optimistic, especially as it pertains to Ruff Drafts, is because we have a great team working to bring you this, and every, issue. Each of the articles you submit is reviewed by one of our two associate editors and yours truly. Leslie Brown and Maggie Marton generously give of their time to review materials and make all your T’s are crossed and I’s are dotted. I’d like to share a little bit about them so you know how and why they care so deeply about presenting your work in the best light possible.

LESLIE BROWN is a writer and editor based in Seattle. She has raised dogs for more than 40 years. She’s spoiled them all for the many dogs that aren’t spoiled. Her involvement with animals took her to Best Friends Animal Society, the nation’s largest sanctuary, where she volunteered as a writer and worked on their first national magazines. She also participated in their initial fundraising efforts. Years later, she heard about a dog blog named Dogspired. She became their chief editor and worked closely with authors, as well as managed the content and design of the blog. Her own blog, “[A Dog and a Keyboard](#),” is about a dog who writes stories for other dogs. Some of these stories have been published in the DWAA newsletter.

MAGGIE MARTON is an award-winning writer based in the Indianapolis area. She covers dogs, cats, kids, and often the intersection of all three for print and online publications. Maggie is the author of *Pet Blogging for Love & Money* and the blogger behind [OhMyDogBlog.com](#). She shares her home with one dog, two cats, two fish, two preschoolers, and a very patient husband.

Without these two wonderful members of our editorial team, we could not deliver Ruff

Drafts to you each quarter. I also want to give a shout out to our graphic designer, Angela Capodanno. Her work on Ruff Drafts is always the glue that brings everything together. However, her creative efforts, represented by the redesign of our publication, are top notch. Thanks one and all.

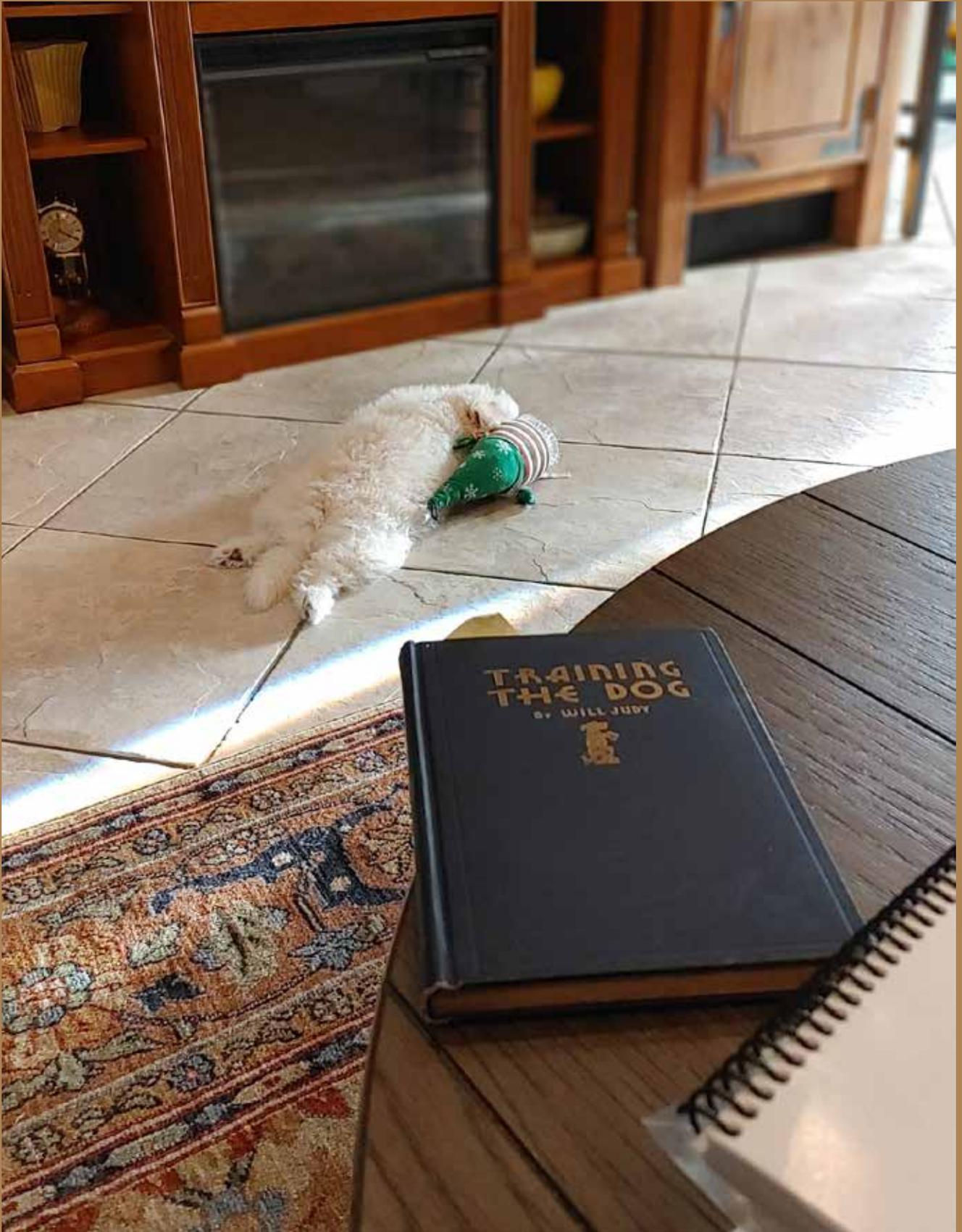
The theme for this issue is “The Things Dogs Learn,” and several of you shared personal experiences or scholarly work about how our best friends adapted to civilization. Dogs were the first thing we humans domesticated—even before plants or other “work” animals. There are multiple theories on how humans and dogs began to interact. A new study (2021) published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* suggests that the world’s first dogs were



Merrie Meyers
with Sunny (L)
and Danny (R)

See FROM THE EDITOR pg 19 ▶





LISA BEGIN-KRUYSMAN

DANCING *with the* SCARS

AND

THE ART OF TRAINING IN THE PAIN

I

T'S A DRIZZLY MORNING in Georgia, 3:00 am to be precise. I'm standing in my driveway enduring yet another attack on my ankles by my recently acquired eight-week old puppy. Instead of heeding my command to "Make Potty Quick," however, his tiny shark-like teeth latch on to my big toe (of course I'm barefoot) and then play tug of war with the hem of my sweatpants. Finally he "makes" and we return inside to sleep.

But I really can't expect much from this little ball of fluff I've named Quint. We've only known each other for a few days and I'm jet lagged and catatonic because just hours before, we'd returned from our Rescue Journey that took me from Jacksonville Florida to San Diego, and back in less than three days.

Despite the fact that my late-husband, Rich, and I had taken that often-broken oath of "No More Dogs" (let alone a puppy) after the loss of our adorable rescue dog, Teddy, just months before, here I am beginning a new chapter with this rambunctious yet adorable puppy.

It was only two months earlier that Rich had been admitted to the ICU at our local hospital in Southeast Georgia. On that very day Quint had begun his life in a loving foster home, born to a stray that had been pulled from a shelter in California just hours before giving birth.

Needless to say, it was an extremely traumatic time. Watching my husband begin his battle for life, one that he'd ultimately lose, I grasped at any glimmer of hope and happiness. With the birth of the "Fab Five" as I called them, I found it.

This litter was being sponsored by a Wisconsin-based rescue group called R & R Sanctuary, known for its work for helping dogs with special needs throughout the nation. I'd come to know its founder, Joy Manley, through my dog-writing and blogging. I'd informed Joy that momma Destiny and her pups had been helping me at a difficult time. All of Destiny's adorable puppies were white, except for one that was the color of toast. I referred to him as "Toasty."

In the beginning of Rich's illness, when he was still able to speak, I liked to share the news and images of this beautiful white fluffy momma dog and her tiny puppies with him. But *my* hope and happiness was not shared by *him*. He reacted to those photos and videos by nodding and frowning. "No more dogs," he whispered. I knew he was still grieving the passing of Teddy. Privately, I kept tabs on the Fab Five, pretending that little "Toasty" was my pup and all would be well in the world.

As the long weeks passed, Rich's health worsened. On what would be his last communicative day, we sat quietly together and watched television in a futile attempt at normalcy. We made small talk, but when I left he whispered, "Get that dog." That day, I made up my mind to honor his last request. I let Joy know that I wanted Toasty and I'd be renaming him Quint to pay homage to Rich's favorite character from his favorite movie JAWS (we'd already had a Hooper). I also informed Joy that I was willing to fly west to personally claim him.

PRISCILLA

LISA BEGIN-KRUYSMAN

DRAWN *to* GLAMOUR

Meet Priscilla Tang,
Professional Pet Portrait Artist



Anyone who has shared their lives with dogs, whether breeding, rescuing or raising them, knows it isn't always a glamorous proposition. ▶

TANG

— PRISCILLA



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TANG

“I am on a quest to honour the hardworking dog mums out there who deserve to feel chic and valued.”

—PRISCILLA "PRISSY" TANG

TANG



Anyone who has shared their lives with dogs, whether breeding, rescuing or raising them, knows it isn't always a glamorous proposition. The care of canines involves a special commitment and sacrifice that sometimes finds us putting the welfare of our beloved pups ahead of our own self-care. For example, are you that dog-lover who schedules your dog's grooming appointment before even making a salon appointment for yourself (or skipping it altogether)?

That's where Hong Kong-based DWAA member Priscilla (Prissy) Tang, Pet Portrait Artist, steps in. By using her creative vision, this talented artist transforms "ordinary" dogs and quiet moments with their humans into glamorous pairings that honor the special canine-human bond.

By combining her passion for fashion and her love of animals, the artist explains, "I am on a quest to honour the hardworking dog mums out there who deserve to feel chic and valued."

Originally from Malaysia, Priscilla's love and natural artistic abilities became evident in her youth. She said "As far as I could remember, drawing has always brought inexplicable comfort, peace and joy to me." Sharing her childhood with two extended families, Priscilla found comfort drawing with her father, which she now regards

as Art Therapy. What began as doodling with her dad, she developed an evident artistic talent. Her favorite subject was her beloved little yellow puppy, Bobby.

Prissy says Bobby was her youthful muse and companion. "Animal Art actually began for me at that spot in my life. I think I was between 6 and 7 years old," she reflects.

After her career in architecture, and then as a fashion illustrator, Prissy observed how her friends derived great delight and comfort through the portraits she created of their dogs. Inspired by this realization, Prissy launched her own pet portrait business, Char Coal Tofu, at the age of 68. Now 70, Prissy notes, "I daresay I have benefitted much from the deep-dived passion that I have given to illustration." She adds that giving back to her dog-loving clientele brings her joy and satisfaction.

These days, Prissy's ultimate goal as an artist is to show the dedication, love and devotion in the relationship between a beloved pet and their owner.

Prissy creates her pet portraits based on a series of at least six photos provided by her clients, offering either a watercolor version or one that is digital. After their initial consultation and sharing those images, Prissy creates digital prints by using Photoshop to make a JPG file, which can then be stored on a computer's hard disk. The finished digital pet portrait can then be printed. Prissy is able to create a unique portrait in 12 to 14 days, which can be shipped internationally within 4 weeks.

ELLA

To learn more about Prissy's work,
please visit:



www.petprissy.com

Throughout her process of creating the portraits, Prissy carefully focuses on the personality, nuances and expressions of each dog and owner to capture the unique connection and love they have for each other. She has fun introducing chic embellishments and accessories to achieve an imaginative and glamorous final picture. Factors influencing the pricing of her work include the size of the finished art work, the number of subjects, or "heads" featured in the art, and whether it is digital or watercolor.

Prissy notes that ultimately, "It is my mission to show these women an image of themselves as the absolute queen that they are in their dog's eyes."

A positive attitude is the key to all of this artist's creative endeavors. Prissy notes that her work helps to mend broken hearts and imbue her clients with a sense of style and confidence, showing that they really are as glamorous and chic as they're portrayed in her work.

There's also a humanitarian aspect to Prissy's artist efforts. She has collaborated with Feed the Pets of the Homeless in Nevada and other dog welfare organizations in the United States, and has donated her pet portraits to international fundraising events to help dog shelters in the United Kingdom and elsewhere, including most recently Bark Aid UK 2021 and Charity Trail Day UK 2021.

The year 2022 promises to be a productive one for Prissy. She has plans to further promote her work through advertorials in pet-related magazines, continue to assist non-profit organizations by donating her pet portrait services for fundraising, and launch a professional e-mail list and blog regularly on her website. Currently, she is preparing to be interviewed by Claire Waite Brown, Founder of Creativity Found and publisher of the Bibles for Artist series available on Amazon.

Reflecting on her 3-year membership in the DWAA, Prissy recalls how she first heard of the organization through then-president Jen Reeder. Jen sponsored her, and although she isn't a dog writer, Prissy's creative career path reminds us that the DWAA is not just for writers, but for all those who capture the dog-human bond through an array of media. She values her personal association

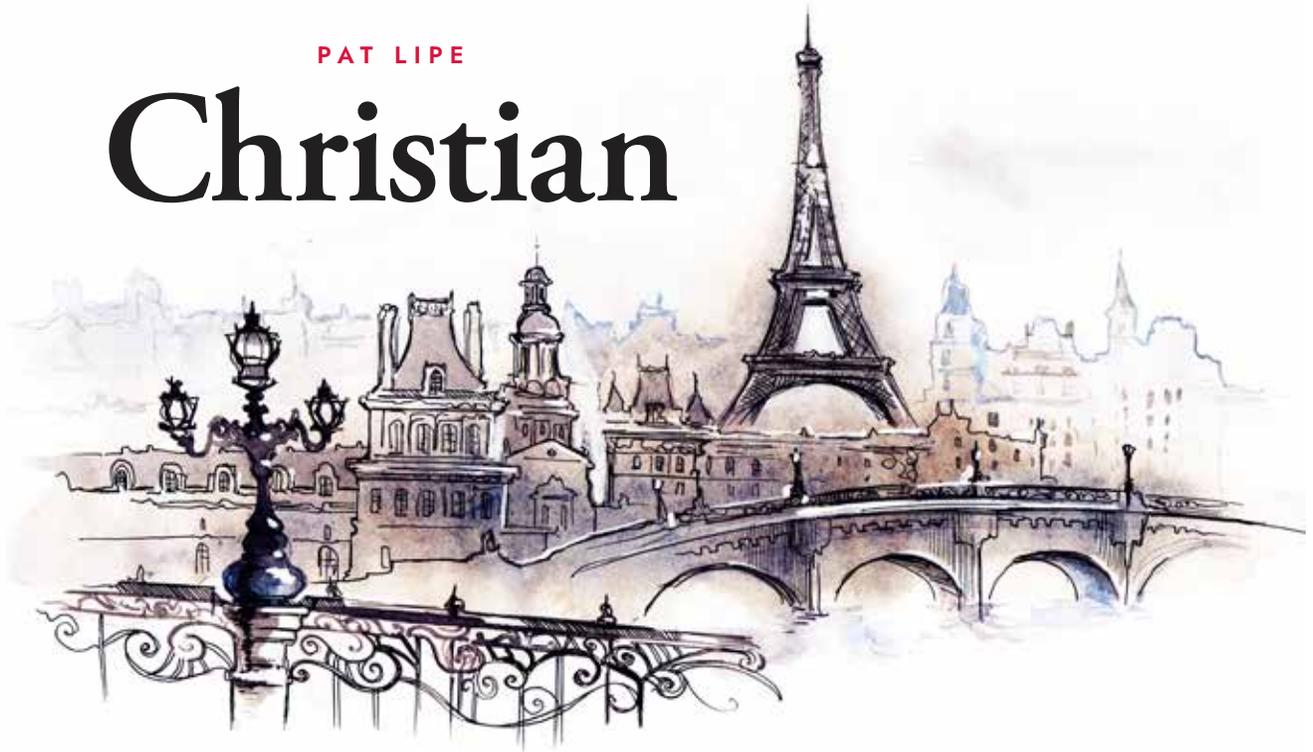
with this well-respected body of dog writers and its on-going relationship with other organizations and sponsors.

We wish Prissy well in all her endeavors as she pursues her goal, "to give this gift of joy to pet owners and dog mums, especially those who are out in all kinds of weather walking their pampered pooches and giving them some special attention, too." ■



PAT LIPE

Christian



THE TELEPHONE RANG in that seesaw aggravating and piercing way only French telephones can sound. It was five am. I rolled over, picked up the receiver, mumbled “Oui,” and a frantic male voice screamed at me. “Come at once,” he said. “Venez vite! Il n’y a pas une minute à perdre!” The “animal” was loose. Everyone was “terrorized” (he did not mince his words even if this is a translation). “Il s’est enfui de la cage. C’est pas possible ça! On a d’autre chose à faire!” he yelled through the speaker. And with a sigh, “Ah! ces Américains!” he hung up.

When I left Washington, it was ostensibly to have a little vacation in Europe. Christian was placed in a kennel. But after several weeks in Paris, I decided to totally immerse myself in the French lifestyle for a year. I rented an apartment in Sèvres and sent for my companion, Christian.

There was a large screened-in area, like a huge cage, at Orly airport containing unclaimed boxes and baggage and, today, one frightened young German Shepherd. When I called him, Christian ran up to me, tail wagging and tongue licking and so loving and grateful for my presence that it really made

the airport stewards look foolish. These big Frenchmen had not dared to enter the ‘cage’ and many irate passengers were impatiently waiting for their bags.

I did not realize it then, but my entire stay in Europe would revolve around this young pup. It was the beginning of a series of adventures I have had throughout the years, always involving a pet.

Christian came home to my apartment outside Paris. He was one worn-out dog suffering from a major bout of jet lag. As the days passed, I took him everywhere, and the French were wonderful with him. He was allowed in cafés, in taxis, almost everywhere except museums.

Then one day he began to throw up. I took him to the vet. Some pills were prescribed. I also realized he never recouped the energy he had before his flight across the ocean.

The medicine did not seem to alleviate Christian’s lethargy. In France, at least in those days, nature was prescribed as often as pills. Whole stores were devoted to the sale of bottled waters. The bottles were assembled according to their curative characteristics. To the uninformed, such a store looked like a wine shop.

Christian had his special waters but still no change. Next on the list of natural cures was a change of environment. If the patient had been human, a spa would have been recommended. In our case, the two options were either the sea or the South.

I had a great Uncle living in Rome. The only American Canon of St. Peter's, Great Uncle William refused to live behind the walls of the Vatican. Instead he had an apartment (replete with chapel) in the Palazzo Doria. Needless to say, Christian and I could not stay with my uncle, but arrangements were made for us to sublet an apartment nearby.

I still have Christian's train ticket. It was a long ride from Paris to Rome made longer by the fact that I had to quickly exit the train with my friend every time it came to a stop, worried lest he make a mess in our cabin.

After getting settled in Rome, my first priority was to take Christian to a vet. The outcome of this visit was the diagnosis of both heartworms and tuberculosis. The doctor said we must first kill the heartworms and then, if he survived, deal with the TB. His diet for the former was pasta. This would be the worst diet for the TB but absolutely necessary for getting rid of the worms.

During this regime, we walked twice daily in a fresh, unpolluted area. Thanks to my great-uncle's landlords, the Principessa and Dom Doria, we had access to one of the Seven Hills of Rome. The Doria family owned one of the most beautiful villas and gardens that I have ever seen. Presenting my pass at the gate, I and my "persona d'accompagnato" had free access to miles of the Doria Pamphini gardens and fields. Reflection ponds, fountains, tall Italian Cypress trees, and fields of manicured grass were all ours alone for the afternoon. Alone, that is, until one day Christian ran off, barking wildly. Behind the trees, down the hill, was a herd of sheep. Before I could catch up with him, Christian had separated one unsuspecting sheep from the herd. Thinking he had seen a wolf, the sheep panicked. Running up the hill, he must have had a heart attack. I found him upside down, legs straight up and very dead. All of a sudden, from down below, came a voice yelling I hated to think what. It was the shepherd who tended the herd. Now we were in real trouble! I grabbed Christian and fearfully awaited the man. Breathlessly, he came up the hill, surveyed his sheep, and then, to my astonishment, shrugged his shoulders. "Una sigaretta americana?" he asked. Boy, was I glad to comply!

Of course, Christian could never shed his "disguise." The Romans knew a wolf when they saw one. "Cane lupo, cane lupo" someone would yell and a whole block of people would run across the street leaving my shepherd and me with an empty sidewalk. If you are in a hurry in Rome, this certainly has its advantages.

Christian improved, regaining some of the spark and stamina of old. We had passed the worm test. Now the diet was changed to beat the TB. Meat replaced the pasta. But the battle was far from won. To help our side, I planned a little trip.

We drove to Assisi, to the Basilica di S. Francesco, or to be precise, to the front pew in front of the altar in the church of the patron saint of animals. The basilica was dark. Candles flickered near the entrance and a pale light shone over the cross above the altar. But to the tourists who came in the narthex or posterior of the church, the two little ears sticking up from the front pew were visible enough to recognize and clearly not human. The guide told me later that he was sure St. Francis was pleased to have Christian in his church, especially a dog so aptly named.

Several months later, we boarded a ship in Naples, once again to cross the Atlantic, but this time in a more leisurely fashion. No more frantic episodes in airports for either of us! Besides, the trip home was strictly first class; at least, it was first class plus for Christian. The kennels were on the top deck while my cabin was several levels below in economy class.

Going through customs in New York, I smiled sweetly, handed my credentials to the officer and then, feigning an embarrassing moment if Christian didn't get to some grass soon, was able to practically run through the process. Should they find out about Christian's illnesses, I thought he might not be allowed back in the U.S. When we finally returned to Washington, I called the vet and made an appointment. X-rays were taken. It appeared that every internal organ was scared or deformed in some way. The doctor said this indicated some serious illnesses. He was amazed that the dog had survived. "Today," he said, "despite all that has gone before, I give Christian a clean bill of health." Thank you, St. Francis. ■

SUSAN L. METZGER, MS, MBA, MFA

How Dogs Learned *to* Fill Human Attachment Needs

A

AS A COUPLES therapist in Boulder, Colorado, I am certified by The Gottman Institute of couples therapy and now study Attachment Theory. I see a direct correlation between

the never-ending human need for attachment and the loving behavior that dogs provide. Who taught them to do this?

In 1760, a Spanish bishop noted that founding children in orphanages who were sheltered, clothed, and fed but not touched, often died “from sadness.” In the 1930s and 40s, orphaned children, deprived of touch and emotional contact, died in droves. Their death certificates read “failure to thrive.”

In the mid 1900s, British psychiatrist John Bowlby (1907-1990) described the fear, sadness, alienation, anger, and hurt that all humans feel when they are rejected by other humans. Although Freud failed to address problems in attachment, Bowlby formulated Attachment Theory, which explains that the need for high-quality connection to loved ones never subsides no matter how old we get. Previously, psychologists believed that coddled children became clingy, overdependent youngsters who matured into inadequate adults. Bowlby, instead, saw four behaviors that are key to attachment: that we “monitor and maintain emotional and physical closeness with our beloved; that we reach out for this person when we’re unsure, upset, or feeling down; that we miss this person when we are apart; and that we count on this person to be there for us when we go out into the world and explore.” (Johnson 17)

In previous decades, psychologists thought that once we grew beyond infancy, we also out-

grew the need to be nurtured. Children raised in the old European belief of “spare the rod, spoil the child” believed that the need to be loved, coddled, and given unconditional positive regard vanished after we reached age two or three. Many adults are still reeling from such an upbringing and find themselves confused about how to attain fulfillment. Some have turned to dogs to meet this core need that *we do not outgrow*, despite what our parents may have believed. We are grateful for dogs’ positive regard—that same regard we received from (most of) our mothers when we were babies.

Christopher, an 80-year-old man whose father told him to stop being a sissy when he was four, can’t wrap his head around the fact that his wife is angry at him for things he’ll never understand. He says, “To quote cartoon character Popeye the Sailor Man, ‘I yam what I yam.’ I’m not going to change.” He sees no reason to provide her with warm hugs, love, and nurturing, and he gets none from her. However, the most precious being in his life is Pepper, a small Australian Shepherd, who wiggles up a storm when she sees him, licks his face, curls up in his lap, growls at strange noises, and does whatever she can to please him. Pepper is Christopher’s primary attachment relationship, and he will do nothing to jeopardize that.

Consider Leyla, a 36-year-old mother of three small children. She works from home as a customer service agent for an insurance company. After a full day of caring for her children while trying to work eight hours, she is exhausted and grumpy when her husband, Mark, arrives home every evening from his job as a UPS driver. He’s also tired, grumpy, and needs from Leyla the same attention she has showered on their kids. But he doesn’t get it. And Leyla is pretty darned needy at

this point and craves for him to hold her tightly and asks, “How was your day? What can I do for you? Should I order a pizza? I’ll watch the kids while you take a long, hot bath if you’d like.”

Instead, Mark tromps around the kitchen, looks for signs of a cooking supper, sees none, and shouts, “I’m starving. You know I do physical work all day. I need a good supper. Why can’t you cook something for me?”

Their Labradoodle and their German Short-hair Pointer stand by and observe all this. One sidles up to Mark and the other to Leyla. Their tails wag as they look into their masters’ eyes, and both parents stroke the dogs, then kneel down so their faces can be lapped with kisses. Each one hugs a dog and feels safe.

It’s clear that dogs, over the years, have learned to provide their owners with what the owners need but don’t receive from their spouses, parents, partners, etc. Dogs have tapped into the human truth that, no matter how old we are, we still need to be adored, cuddled, told that we are safe, and that we are loved—the way our mothers or other attachment figure did when we were infants.

But many parents withdraw most of this adoring attention as the children grow up. Instead, they request good behavior and obedience. And then, who do these grown-up children turn to to have this need fulfilled? Yep, a romantic love partner, but when the partner fails to provide for these needs, what do they do?

If there is no such “person” to fulfill these needs, many turn to dogs. But how did dogs learn to provide these attributes to us? Of course, no one dog in its single lifetime can learn these behaviors. However, through selective breeding over centuries, Man bred only those dogs who displayed this loving, protective behavior. Who wants a dog that doesn’t wag its tail, come with joy when it’s called, and occasionally growl to help us feel safe? Although our mothers don’t wag tails and lick our faces, the parallels in loving, safe, adoring behaviors are undeniable. We can thank early breeders for “teaching” dogs this cherished phenomenon and modern breeders for perpetuating it. ■

WORK CITED

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LESLIE BROWN

THE COME, *the* SIT, *and the* STAY

IT'S HARD TO LEARN these commands. So far, I haven't done too well. But my humans keep trying.

Obedience school

I did the Come. I did the Sit. But I messed up the Stay. I'm not that patient. So I flunked obedience school. But I got a graduation hat anyway. They do that for all the dogs, even dogs like me.

I thought I was finished with obedience school, but they made me try again. I flunked that class too. It was the Sit-Stay that did me in. I just didn't get why I had to sit for so long.

I guess obedience school wasn't for me. But I did keep the hat.

Crate training

Then they tried using a dog crate. Someone said it was good for Crate Training. But how was

I supposed to learn anything without someone in there with me?

Take the Come command. Forget it. You simply cannot run to someone in a dog crate.

Or the Sit command. Forget that one too. Unless you want to bump your head.

Then there's the Stay command. This one works great in a dog crate. I mean, what other choice do you have?

And another thing. If you want to act like a guard dog, a crate is not the best place to be either. How can you look scary and mean when you're behind bars?

So, goodbye dog crate. Give the cat a turn.

Treats and toys

Maybe my humans will try teaching me commands another way – like when you get treats and toys for doing something right. I'd even try the Stay command again for enough peanut butter. ■

JAMES COLASANTI JR.

Keeping Kathy Company

A MAN...

A CHANCE MEETING...

AND THE GIRL OF HIS DREAMS.



WHEN I FIRST MET KATHY, she wouldn't sleep with me! To say I was a bit disappointed would have been an understatement. She was very cute and the way she looked at me with those soft brown eyes made me think that she was the one for me. However, she sort of stood there, terrified.

I usually don't have this problem, being the charismatic and fun-loving guy I am. My father had always told me that girls were a lot smarter than boys, so I should be aware of that when making my choice.

I looked back at her and asked, "What's the matter"? In return, I got a very pensive stare. She was watching my every move, never taking her eyes away from my gaze.

When we first encountered each other, we were both at the Guilford County Animal Shelter in North Carolina looking for a forever friend. One dog stared at me through the crisscross fencing of the kennels, and in that instant I knew it had to be her - Kathy was my choice. She had a black mask covering her snout, very raccoon-like, and ears that reached for the sky, although they turned out sideways from her face. I could hear Kathy speaking to me, saying "Pick me, pick me," as clearly as if I were hearing it out loud.

The week-long wait for Kathy to be spayed seemed never-ending, but she couldn't leave the pound without this important operation.

Once she was home with us, we started to think of a new nickname. It came to us – queen princess doo--doo. We soon learned that she was a very intelligent dog and perhaps, a bit fussy. That was just the beginning.

Housetraining is a must for a multiple-dog household. When Kathy first arrived, she did fairly well. Most dogs actually learn from one another. They know to go out and what they are there for. But Kathy developed a prima-donna attitude. She would go out and take care of her primary business - -number one.

But later, we would often discover a surprise. If the backyard grass was a bit too wet, or a bit too tall, or if she couldn't find a suitable spot for her needs, we would leave us a gift. Hence, her nickname.

A lot of folks like to teach their dogs tricks so they become a semi-educated circus act. We do not. We prefer that they come to us when called, mainly for safety issues. But our dogs are our family, our companions, and they are not here to entertain us. However, Kathy chose to sit on her own. The more



◀
Photo by Eniko Kubinyi,
Department of Ethology,
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MERRIE MEYERS

DOGS *as* LINGUISTS

“This is the first nonprimate species for which we could show spontaneous language ability -- the first time we could localize it and see where in the brain this combination of two languages takes place.”

A

RECENT ARTICLE posted in CNN’s *Wonder Theory* newsletter (perhaps you saw it) suggests a hidden benefit to our work at home experiences of the last two years. By spending more time with our pets, we might have crossed a linguistic barrier. Researchers placed headphones on the dogs to see how their canine brain responded to different languages. Neurologist Laura Cuaya studied 18 dogs, monitoring them inside of fMRIs (functional magnetic resonance imaging), found that the canine brain can recognize different languages.

In the study, the participating pups lay quietly while an fMRI machine rotated around them. They listened while a voice recited lines from “The Little Prince” in different languages, in this case, Spanish and Hungarian, and then added some nonsense words. Two of the dogs were familiar with Spanish but had never heard Hungarian, the other 16 dogs

were familiar with Hungarian but not Spanish. None were conversant in gobbledygook.

The results? Brain scans of the patient pups showed different activity patterns when nonsense words were spoken versus natural speech, and unique areas of the brain became active when the unknown language was spoken, as compared to familiar speech. Research findings suggest that dog brains can detect speech and distinguish between familiar and unfamiliar language.

According to Attila Andics, Ethology Department chair at Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest, Hungary, who led the experiment, “This is the first nonprimate species for which we could show spontaneous language ability -- the first time we could localize it and see where in the brain this combination of two languages takes place.” ■

From the Editor

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domesticated in northern Siberia around the end of the last ice age. Descendants of this wolf-like animal went both east and west populating Eurasia and the Americas. The study, which reviewed mitochondrial genomes from ancient people and animals, found remarkable similarities in genetic signatures between the two species, suggested that as humans migrated and adapted to their climates, they took their dogs with them, and the dogs adapted as well. Not everyone agrees that this is the definitive explanation of how dogs were domesticated and learned to live with humans, and everyone agrees that more research on the origins of the connection is needed.

Regardless of when and where this connection was forged, there is no doubt a connection exists. An animal behaviorist in Japan found that human-dog interactions produce an oxytocin positive feedback loop similar to that between mothers and infants. Expanding on this research, a Ph.D. student in Australia found that oxytocin also enhances the ability of dogs to understand human behavior.

While dogs continue to adapt and learn about us, we need to continue to learn about how they learn. During the COVID-19 shutdown, dog adoption mushroomed. Many are first time dog owners without any idea how to help their dogs learn desired behaviors.

A 2019 Portuguese study evaluated the efficacy of dogs trained using either punitive or positive reinforcement methods. Dogs trained using positive methods performed better at new tasks while dogs trained with negative reinforcement displayed more observable stress and higher cortisol levels in their saliva. Research found that aversive training slows canine learning because it diminishes a dog's confidence and its relationship with a handler.

Susan Friedman, a psychology professor at Utah State University, gravitated to dog-training after a 20 year career in special education. Her early work on positive reinforcement was met with skepticism. But, recently, there has been growing support for a more effective and more ethical way to train animals. She has consulted with zoos and aquariums worldwide and argues that an analysis of an animal's needs might help trainers. In 2019, she produced a "hierarchy roadmap," which helps owners identify underlying causes and conditions of behavior and

address most likely influences. I liken it to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.

In the last two decades, a lot of work has been done in the area of dog cognition: understanding how dogs think, learn, problem solve and communicate. Researchers across the globe have attempted to broaden our understanding of how dogs think and learn. My personal observation, based on absolutely no scientific data, is that my dogs have learned how to train me.

If you're a regular *Ruff Drafts* reader, you may remember my column announcing a new arrival into our pack. Danny, a Bichon, is generally quiet. You barely know he's there, until its feeding time. Since joining the household, he has trained Sunny, my rambunctious Jack Russell, to "bark-ticulate" when it is feeding time. Prior to Danny's arrival, Sunny would wait patiently for kibble, rarely making a noise at feeding time. Now, based on a newly acquired behavior, you can set a watch for 8 a.m. and 5 p.m.

According to Cold Nose College founder Lisa Lyle Waggoner, CPDT-KA, PMCT2, CSAT, the four stages of learning for a dog are acquisition, fluency, generalization and maintenance.

I think the dogs are doing a great job gaining my attention (acquisition) by pacing and subtle bumping, and making their interests known (fluency). In addition to Sunny's barking and Danny's yips, Danny will underscore the point by sitting up on his haunches and gesturing with his front paws. They have learned to "double-team" me into submission, starting with soft, subtle, reminders of the time, bumps and purrs, then escalating to a rather pronounced commentary, coupled with pacing back and forth in front of their bowls, if I delay.

Heaven forbid they start applying this technique with other interests (generalization) such as walks, playtime, and it becomes a constant issue (maintenance). Oh wait, that's already happened. I guess the joke's on me. According to an article in the *Animal Welfare Institute Quarterly*,

"Even if animals... learn to respond to a certain situation in order to trigger a predictable...reaction in another partner, this does not exclude the possibility that the learned response is an expression of humor/amusement/fun."

BILLIE GROOM

Teaching, Learning, *and* “UnLearning” Behavior

Can you teach an old dog new tricks? Can dogs learn, or “unlearn” behaviors once they are beyond puppyhood?

P

UPPIES THINK AND LEARN differently than dogs over six months old. As pups mature into the adolescent stage, their cognitive skills develop (think of a child turning from three to four years old) and they begin to think and process differently. An adolescent dog who excelled at puppy training may suddenly refuse to follow house rules or decide “coming when called is stupid.” Often these changes in behavior are viewed as defiant or regressive behavior. In fact, the learning capacity of dogs increases as they mature. As their cognitive skills develop, it allows them to make decisions and decipher the world around them differently, resulting in changes in behavior.

Alternatively, dogs who were not granted a conventional puppyhood, and therefore not exposed to positive puppy training methods, learn at a young age how to stay safe, alive, and as healthy as possible in the environment around them. They learn through trial and error, observation, and following the lead of wiser dogs, how to navigate their environment.

In both cases, dogs over the age of six months have preconceived thought patterns based on what they learned during puppyhood, among other factors, such as genetics and personality. Their behaviors are determined by their thought patterns

and their perceptions. To effectively integrate rescued dogs into our homes, and/or address change in behaviors, we need to understand their learned behaviors, and harness the cognitive skills determining these behaviors.

As with humans, our approach to teaching, communicating, rehabilitating, and integrating dogs into our lives should adapt to the individual dog. Different methods and teaching styles are often effective at different stages in a dog’s life depending on how they learn, what they have already learned, and the principles governing the methods. Dogs over six months of age can learn new skills and change behavior; however, their interest in doing so largely depends on the approach we take to teaching.

Conventional puppy training techniques are designed to encourage wanted behaviours and discourage unwanted behaviors through reactive reinforcements. Reinforcements teach “right from wrong,” allowing us to teach manners, ensure proper socialization, and successfully house train. Reinforcements during puppyhood also stimulate positive thought patterns that decrease the chances of anxiety or aggressive behaviors as they mature. This type of learning is called Conditioning. Conditioning Methods are designed to



“teach”. They are most effective with puppies because their thought patterns are still developing. Cognitive abilities during the development stages commonly lead to wanted behaviors when reinforcements are applied appropriately. Puppies, and some dogs over the age of six months, like learning through reinforcements, making Conditioning methods effective.

As dogs mature their cognitive functions develop, leading to a greater capacity to think, process, and learn! For example, behaviors common in adolescent dogs who learned “right from wrong” during puppyhood via conditioning methods, dogs with unconventional upbringings who have self-learned behaviors, or dogs with anxiety, have learned certain behaviors achieve their goal.

Continuing to rely on methods designed to teach “right from wrong” through reinforcements,

association and desensitization can be limiting, ineffective, and even counterproductive because in their mind, they have learned how to achieve their goal and have no reason to change their behavior.

When behaviors are driven from experiences (whether via conventional training or otherwise), it is often necessary to apply a methodology which harnesses the emotional intelligence determining these behaviors. To change learned behavior, as opposed to teaching expected behaviors and encouraging wanted thought patterns, we need a methodology whose platform is designed to change perception to change behavior. Canine Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is designed to change perception first. By providing dogs with skills that harness their cognitive thought patterns driving

BARBARA E. MAGERA

EFFIE



At only a few months old, my little ruby girl was a cuddler. Even at a young age, she knew when I needed a hug. As a pup, she would nuzzle my cheek and wrap her furry head around my neck. She was not the type to cover me with wet kisses or sloppy licks. She just liked to nuzzle and cuddle. Many a time we fell fast asleep with her head on my chest and her paw outstretched.

She was always energetic and ready to bolt off my lap to play “fetch the knot ball” with her brothers. Although not as strong as the boys, her athletic skills were impressive. Her favorite toys were Dr. Noy’s toys which are soft and small. Petite toys to fit her petite body. Whether she caressed Teddy, Ducky or Mr. Frog, she loved them all. I preferred these toys because they did not contain stuffing which, when ingested, could potentially impact canine GI tracts. Many a morning, as I awoke, my sleepy eyes opened to one of her toys resting on my pillow.

Her culinary delights included flying blueberries. We had constant fun with Effie and the pack catching airborne blue spheres. This game was also nutritious because blueberries are a high source of antioxidants.

However, trying to enhance her diet with vegetables was a challenge. Despite cutting cooked or raw vegetables in various sizes or pieces, she managed to pick them out and neatly place them outside of her food bowl. She was a true carnivore; occasionally enjoying apples, pears or peaches as a treat.

We had great fun at dog shows where she thoroughly enjoyed the pampering, grooming and strutting her stuff in the ring. At an Orlando winter show, I was at the end of her lead. The large number of exhibitors required that we huddle sitting on the floor waiting our turn to return to the ring. In the adjacent ring was a class of large dogs. Because of their extreme close proximity, I felt sure that if Effie even caught a glimpse of these giants her immediate response might be to “freak out”. I focused her attention on me by continuously feeding her morsels of liver. As time passed, I realized my liver stash rapidly dwindled to the point that Effie was chewing on my fingers. A kind soul passed me a chunk of liver. When our turn arrived to gait around the ring and then stack, she did this

flawlessly. Her big brown and soulful eyes attracted the attention of the Judge where she was awarded BOS. I was thrilled. Effie was equally excited until a large breasted tall woman approached us with open arms. Effie gave me a look of near terror. The admirer hugged us but then quickly realized this well-meaning gesture was beyond Effie’s comfort zone. After enduring this scary situation, I fed Effie more liver and she recovered her composure. We played hard and long that night with her brothers in our hotel suite.

Effie tried to be a Mom twice. Her first mating resulted in a lost litter. Further attempts with a champion male never resulted in a pregnancy. In the past year, she had viable pups including a female ruby. She was an attentive and good mom.

Although fun loving, Effie was a sensitive little girl who recognized when humans need nurturing. When I look at the moon and stars in the midnight sky, like we did so many nights before, I pray that angels watch over her and flood her heart with my love. I will always love and remember you my little ruby starlet. ■

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ANNE MARIE DUQUETTE

WONDER DOG'S TENNIS BALL



W

WHEN OUR BELOVED family dog finally crossed the rainbow bridge, I knew he was gone forever, or so I thought. I was wrong. He miraculously, unbelievably, came back! To start at the beginning...

Baron was our Wonder Dog, a mostly Lab pound puppy. I'd driven past the animal shelter one day and fell in love. My husband and son brought Baron home the same day, much to the delight of our diapered daughter. He grew from a pup into a shining gem—loyal, loving, protective, intelligent, and the damn best babysitter in the world.

Yes, Baron was the perfect pet except for two things. One, he hated delivery people, and two, he grew very old. When I told him sadly that it was time to end his suffering and see the vet, I was shocked to see huge tears fall from those big brown eyes. I had never before, nor ever since, seen a dog cry.

Baron didn't come home, and the four of us went into mourning. I placed his favorite toys, the five tennis balls he would never share with the other two dogs, as a memorial on the fireplace mantle. My breaking heart knew our Baron was never coming home. Guess what? He did.

I started seeing him around the house, lying in his favorite places! I thought I was definitely losing my marbles until I heard the same from my

now 11-year-old daughter. She was hit especially hard, for she had no memory of life without Baron like the rest of us. She didn't know whether to be frightened or not.

I told her, "I've seen him too. Don't be scared. Baron knows we aren't ready to say goodbye yet." We continued to see Baron as solid, as lifelike as ever. Only when we went near him did he vanish, only to reappear later.

Months went by, yet our phantom dog remained. I finally suggested to the family that we get another Lab. My daughter broke into tears. "No Barons! I want a small dog."

At a no-kill shelter, she finally found "my dog." Only this was an abused, traumatized, and rescued wreck who refused to bond with anyone. Yet my daughter swore Tivvy was "the one." The shelter woman regretfully informed her that the white terrier had been spoken for. My daughter broke into tears and pleaded, "At least let me hold her!"

The sympathetic woman agreed. My daughter begged, "Do something, Mom!" about the new adopters. When I didn't answer, she sunk to the floor cross-legged and cried even harder.

Here came Tivvy on a leash, urinating and defecating from fear. To everyone's surprise, Tivvy unexpectedly yanked free and ran to my daughter.

Dog in lap, my daughter hugged Tivvy close and sobbed, "Please, Mom, she loves me! Can't I have her?" I knew what was coming. Three pairs of eyes--spouse, shelter worker, and my child looked

toward me for the deciding vote. No one wanted to be the villain in this piece.

Well, I am a mother, after all, and I'd walk over hot coals for my kids. So I said, "I'm a writer and I work at home. This little animal obviously needs around the clock care and attention. She'll definitely get it from us."

My daughter squealed with joy. Tivvy's adopters went home with another dog. But it wasn't easy for us. Tivvy's first four months were a nightmare. She slept, ate, peed, and pooped fearfully under my daughter's bed, only coming out when she came home from school.

In the meantime, my phantom Baron continued to appear when I missed him the most, especially when Tivvy rejected us. Again. And again. And again.

Then one day, something happened. The light dawned in this poor little terrier's head. She learned she wasn't in hell anymore! She had nothing to fear! She stopped cringing and hiding, and even learned to use the dog door, much to everyone's olfactory relief.

Still, I mourned my Baron, even though his ghost continued to keep me company. I'd been the first one to see him as a little puppy. Unlike anyone else, I spent 24-7 with Baron for 13 years. He was my faithful office buddy, always under my desk when I was writing.

I looked at Baron's row of tennis balls on the mantle, the only things he ever refused to share with the pack, and held one gently in my hand. Even with Baron dead, I wouldn't let the other dogs touch his toys. They were holy relics. But should they be?

Sadly, I picked one up and tossed it down the hall, just as I'd done hundreds of times for Baron. Suddenly, Tivvy popped up from under the couch and chased the ball with unrestrained joy. She actually brought it back to me! I couldn't believe it! She'd never barked once before, this silent, timid, frightened little dog, yet she was barking with eagerness now.

I repeatedly threw the ball and she retrieved it until she was breathless, then hopped into my lap, ball in mouth. For the first time, she let me cuddle her.

I never saw Baron again after that day with Tivvy and his old green tennis ball. Our loyal

canine friend finally went to whatever reward The Creator has in wait. I finally said good-bye, a very hard thing to do. He was an incredibly loyal dog who, even in death, chose to stay and comfort me until Tivvy finally learned to accept her new family.

Tivvy was dearly loved by us for 19 years. She and I both learned that second chances are possible if you dare trust in new beginnings. Every time I saw her with a tennis ball, I marveled at two miracles - her new lease on life and Baron's afterlife with me.

Some people think I've stretched the truth about my Wonder Dog. After all, I AM a fiction writer, but I stand by my story. When questioned, Tivvy, who lived in the house with my phantom companion, always remained silent. YOU decide... ■



▲
Baron with his
tennis ball

▼
My daughter
with Tivvy



Scars

► CONTINUED from pg 7

On December 8, on a sun-drenched day in the beautiful Sea Port Village of San Diego my little bundle of hope was handed over to me by Roberta and Ola who'd lovingly fostered Destiny and her pups for weeks. It is a day I will never forget, a moment when a new life path was forged for dog and human.

Now, at 12-weeks old, Quint is being introduced to basic commands. Armed with vague memories from over 20 years ago since my last pup, videos, books and advice from my dog-training friends, I find myself mustering all the patience I can in the process. After all, persistence and patience are the keystones of obedience training, but I must admit, as one gets older, those qualities are harder to muster.

These days I find myself reading books written decades ago by DWAA co-founder, William Lewis Judy. The ultimate dog-enthusiast, Judy started his life trained for the ministry in his rural Pennsylvania town, and although his life would take him far from home, and to a legendary career as Publisher of *Dog World Magazine*, his minister-like approach to training dogs would always remain filled with kindness and sensitivity.

In the Foreword of his sixth edition of *Training the Dog* (1941) Judy shared his philosophy

on training when he wrote, "...it is for man, the allegedly superior animal, to show this superiority in kindness rather than force in sympathetic understanding rather than brutal disregard."

I am fortunate that Quint is a happy and bright puppy. He is social and curious and with time and gentle direction may become a wonderful Therapy Dog. And he's off to a good start on his frequent visits to his "Grandpa" in a pet-friendly assisted living facility.

On those late night and early morning trips to the yard to accommodate Quint's tiny bladder, when I endure his continued fascination with my feet and ankles, I have begun to amuse myself by choreographing "dance" moves. As Quint playfully weaves between my calves and jumps and twirls in the air with frenetic puppy energy taking nips at my shins as he goes I pretend we are a dog and human dance pair starring in a show I call Dancing with the Scars.

In the soft glow of Christmas lights, I imagine Rich smiling down on us happy that I got "that dog" and content in the knowledge that I really did take his advice every once in a while and that day by day, walk by walk, treat by treat; the powerful love of a little pup is working its "heeling" magic. ■

Old Dog New Tricks

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behaviors, we change their perception of us and of the perceived need to do a behavior to achieve their goal. Canine CBT establishes platform skills that show dogs that we recognize what is important to them, respect their individual personalities, and harness their emotional intelligence. In other words, Canine CBT is a "two-way relationship" – when we learn from them, they learn from us.

Whether we are simply enjoying canine enrichment games, participating in sports, teaching scent detection, training guide dogs, or integrating rescued dogs into our families, we are harnessing their cognitive abilities. It makes sense, then, to harness these same abilities when addressing behaviors asso-

ciated with anxiety, aggression, and ones common in the adolescent stage, and with adopted dogs.

Dogs love learning, and, as with people, dogs do not all learn the same way. It is important to be flexible, learn what they know, and adapt our approach to suit each dog at different stages in their lives. ■

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Kathy

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we praised her, the more she sat. She was her own one-woman act.

When we first got Kathy, she didn't bark. We thought she was just a quiet dog. Well that certainly turned out to be a misnomer. One day, Kathy, who was barking loudly protected me from potential harm.

One sunny, early Friday afternoon, I was home in bed with one of the most horrible flu bugs I could remember. This was ironic, as I always got an annual flu shot. But evidently, this time it didn't work.

The dogs started barking as if someone was approaching the house. The cacophony was loud - they were barking to the nth degree! Somehow the dogs knew and were in total protection mode. And to be honest, it sounded like 40 dogs. The barking went on. But you know, I didn't care. I was just too sick to even move a muscle. I just lay there and listened

to the continuous barking chorusing around me while I waited for a knock on the door. And then suddenly, just as quickly as it had begun, the dogs stopped barking and were silent. No more noise. Not a sound. And yet, no one knocked on the door. No one.

The very next day I received a call from a friend on the Greensboro Police Force. She asked, "Were you home yesterday"? When I answered, yes, she said, "Well then, you were lucky!" A group of daytime house burglars were canvassing our neighborhood looking for prime houses to rob. My dogs literally scared them away. Nothing can replace the security of a good watchdog - or several of them.

And you know who is curled up under my right arm right now, keeping me warm? Three guesses. But the only one who counts is Kathy! ■



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